

CRUMBS FOR THE BOGEYMAN



poems by

Daphne Athas

CRUMBS FOR THE
BOGEYMAN

poems by
Daphne Athas

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many of these poems have appeared, some with alternate titles, in the following publications: *I Remain Permanent* in ***Southern Poetry Review***; *Menu* in ***Envoi 7***; *Before Cooking* in ***Miscellany***; *Beans* in ***Miscellany***; *The Snivelling Gravy Boat to Its Owner* in ***The Southern Poetry Review***; *South Coast of Crete—Plakias* in ***Sun and Moon***; *To an Exiled Athenian Recently Returned Home* in ***Southern Poetry Review***; ***NC Poetry***, ***The Seventies***; *Auschwitz, Averoff, Lyubyanka* in ***Images***; *Ah, So, and Aha* in ***Sanskrit***; *The Picture of the Pergola at Sochi* in ***College English***; *Song of an American* in ***Transatlantic Review***; *Crumbs for the Bogeyman* in ***Southern Poetry Review***; *I Came Face to Face with the River* in ***Southern Voices***; *Song for the Underworld* in ***Envoi***; *The Bell and the Turkey* in ***The Beloit Poetry Journal***; *How Jane Continues Her Search Since the Roles Don't Fit* in ***After Dark***; *Emily Bronte Dying of Consumption* in ***Sanskrit***; *Poetasters* in ***Sanskrit***; *Ode to Vivien Leigh* in ***The South Carolina Review***, reprinted under the title *Vivien Leigh Contemplates Her Movie Reflection in the Lake at Tickerage Mill* in ***After Dark***; *I Saw Red Shoes Again After 20 Years and It Was A Good Movie* in ***Sanskrit***; *On Returning Home* in ***Southern Poetry Review*** under the title, *On Returning to North Carolina*, reprinted in ***Contemporary Poetry of North Carolina*** and in ***The Alumni Review of The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill***.

© Copyright 1991 Daphne Athas

ISBN: 0-932662-78-1

Printed by Monument Printers & Lithographers, Inc.
Verplanck, New York
for St. Andrews College Press
Laurinburg, North Carolina

Book Design by Carol Tremblay
WORDGraphics
Wilmington, North Carolina

For Lee Burgess
for first making me hear
the sound beyond prose



THIS BOOK MADE POSSIBLE BY
FRIENDS OF THE PRESS.

BOOKS BY DAPHNE ATHAS

Novels

The Weather of the Heart

The Fourth World

Entering Ephesus

Cora

Nonfiction

Greece by Prejudice

Plays

Sit on the Earth

Coauthor Gurney Campbell

in *The Observer Plays*

produced as *Ding Dong Bell* by Theater Guild

at Westport Country Playhouse, Connecticut

Articles

Goddesses, Heroines, and Women Writers

Cyclops in Steam

Why There Are No Southern Writers

Syntax in the Age of Vibration

The Bicycle Path

Carrboro, Cradle of Dreams

Phallus Fever in the Executive Woman

The Princes and the Pauper

Quest for Artemis

Max at the Beach

Noble Causes; Human Rights

Mothers and Writers

CONTENTS

1	I Remain Permanent
2	Menu
3	Before Cooking
4	Beans
5	O little seeker
6	The Snivelling Gravy Boat to Its Owner
7	Pocketbooks
8	The Troll Offers His Complaint
10	The Troll and the Mermaid
11	A Screech
12	Five little bedbugs
13	Asbestos
14	South Coast of Crete—Plakias
15	To an Exiled Athenian Recently Returned Home
17	Auschwitz, Averoff, Lyubyanka
18	Ah, So, and Aha
19	The Picture of the Pergola at Sochi
20	Song of an American
22	Age 96, My Mother Speaks from Elderhaven
26	Psyche
27	Crumbs for the Bogeyman
29	The Free Bird Flew into the Waterwheel
30	I Came Face to Face with the River
32	Knowing
33	Song for the Underworld
34	I am the bell
35	Couple
36	The Bell and the Turkey
37	How Jane Continues Her Search Since the Roles Don't Fit
39	Iran
40	One Inch More
41	Emily Bronte Dying of Consumption
42	Neat
43	Poetasters
44	Ode to Vivien Leigh
45	I Saw <i>Red Shoes</i> Again After 20 Years and It Was a Good Movie
46	On Returning Home

CRUMBS FOR THE BOGEYMAN

“ „ “ „ “ „ “ „

I Remain Permanent

I remain permanent.
I remain permanent.

Humpty Dumpty laughs but falls
Leaving the grin of the Cheshire cat.
I reach to kiss that formal mouth.
There is no mouth. There is no wall.
There is no soft, no cling.
The forms eluding as I love.
I check to spring my soul in thrall.
To what am I attached, oh God,
That I remain permanent?

Menu

I'll toast the sky
And you can have it for breakfast.
Crisp,
And buttered with fresh sun.

I'll heat it up midday;
And don't you complain it's too hot.
For I'll serve you blue lake sundae
Minted with herbs
And darkling, cool.

In the afternoon we can sit
 for fondued clouds
 and blue flies
Washed down with rain.

But I promise you that evening is the best,
For we shall feast upon sky-blood cutlets
Dashed with the most delicate quiet-sauce.
And for hors-d'oeuvres, swallows' wings
And for steak, the borealis, rare.
 Tureens full of stars
 Mistral waters,
 Or milk.
And for dessert, the moon, slightly brandied.

What more can you ask?

Before Cooking

We looked at the dead octopus in the basin;
It floated like a pudding,
Its tentacles wraiths of jelly.
Suddenly a beat quivered,
The breath of the heart-head.
We put our fingers out to its suction caps
Which clung feebly.

Beans

Beans have their strings down their sides,
The secret zippers of their life,
The nearest they can get to bones.
Vegetables do not need bones.
You know they will live longer
Than animals on legs.

O little seeker

O little seeker
Of the riddle of me
You will see
Me to be
One of the
Holes
In a holy sneaker.

The Snivelling Gravy Boat to Its Owner

Don't mend me—
Lend me.
Perhaps the crack is in your eye
And I am falsely leaking fat.

Send me away.
Another day, another eye
Will see no crack, and I
Will have my fat complete
In my debilitated vat.

Or shatter me
Upon the floor.
So then you can afford to cry.
Do not, do not identify.

Pocketbooks

Pocketbooks are middle-aged
ladies
especially
when they swing.
Do not laugh.

You too may waggle
your thighs
with pathos
unable to find
your double chin
when you need it.

Bouncing along on a strap
and a string
You will
enthuse.

Generous are you
and gallant

Who waste your fat
gaily unaware
the vessel
of trivia
pays the price
We put on history.

The Troll Offers His Complaint

The evil breaks its nest this morning.
I have been over to the hens' bin.
I have had pale stones skid my face,
 ungracious bumps to remember
 those flossy-feathered matrons by.
I only stuck my tongue out, God.

They told me:
"You're old, You're high
 as the eighth wish wire
 on the barnyard fence!"
They scratched their feathers
 and pinched their ravelled faces
 with righteous yellow claws.
They spat the Bible at me, God.

Now,
I lay my head in the shade of
 the green, shuddering trees.
I could not savor less this compelling,
 bitter, fitful cage,
 these sad wires,
 these hopping creatures
 of plumed and grinning prisondom.

I could not savor less
these heaths, God,
clammy to my elbow and my brow
Which fail to see or touch
their ends,
More green childish
endlessness my brain
fatigues itself
to fathom
More stars to see,
More stars
to flaunt in eager, scratchy voices:
“You have seen!
“You have seen with blase effort...
“What have you seen?”

...I could not savor less,
God,
These credulous mounds
You have fashioned
To touch my slender soul.

The Troll and the Mermaid

Oh Troll,
You stood with winking ears
 at your listening post.
I almost laughed at how eager you were,
Your awesome naughtiness
 trailing from the sky-pier
 on a bawdy red string.

I was glad.
I was not afraid.
I could pin my meagre heart
 on your clever shiny hook
 for your wondrous glee
Knowing your flaming soul
 would make mine cool
 beside.

I said:
"In this frothless labyrinth
Among vegetables and raw white stones
I have found a secret."
'Oh Troll,' I laughed inside
'Would you could breathe this water...
You could see him too!'

Your lips hung loose,
Your pink cheeks wavered slowly
 in the silver rippled
 undulations at the surface.
Your disappointed face turned away from my sea
 to the bony, sterile shore.
The shiny hook jerked high.
I saw my heart, mouse-colored,
Thrown careless on the sand
Two inches away from you.

A Screech

I thought it would be long
I thought it would be longer
Oh,
The murmur of bees on that tame night.

Why didn't somebody go down with
a sword
And smite a mighty face,
A hole where could come the thunder,
Not to roll,
But to screech
And purify by vibration
All the known forms of our sayings?

Such is time now
That the short can be stretched
only by a screech.

Five little bedbugs

Five little bedbugs sat on a screw

Practicing to become

angels on the head of a pin.

Failing, they said in five different octaves,

“Oh, what a mess the world is in!”

ASBESTOS

that cobweb

Of the moon's eye, spun in those vast and secret
Hours when the earth's face was turned
Away from the sun. Printed
Upon the speechless
Dark, upon the speechless rock, subtler than ashes,
Asbestos
cannot burn away
The fantasy deep in the maze
Of entrails men mine for miracles.

When the earth turns again, the simulacrum
Stares at the sun and pretends to be an empty
Quarry, powdered by machines
To dust.

But its eyelashes stand up against time,
An illusion woven in stone, refusing
To vibrate its destiny,
The gossamer victory over the sun
By the murdered moon.

South Coast of Crete—Plakias

When I ask myself what you would do
If the wind swept down your bones
And shrieked across the wires,
I answer: you would find a cave and work.
Which cave?
The mouth the Germans dynamited out in 1943 for guns?
This is the last coast from which
Prisoners escaped in submarines.
You have to swim through teeth,
But they conduct like fans
And even gold fillings cannot plug the sound.

To an Exiled Athenian Recently Returned Home

~ For Miranda Cambanis

If the moon remains calm, if the tree
Is still intact outside your room,
What does the silent shell say, the four walls bandaged
To protect passersby from falling debris? The scaffold is
modest,
Only incidentally hiding its decapitation.
People have their heads; who cares about a roof?
Your child's handprint signals from the rubble
At the hole which was once your door.
We stand on the opposite curb listening
To the rattle of an Athens night, and watching
Your door which leans unhinged against your wall.
"Don't come here again," I say.
Shall we root for the stone to miss the sign?
Tomorrow in the lot made vacant for development an eye or
bone
Will face your memory
Because dismantling demands technology.
Teeth here, hair there, shoes with worn-down heels inside
the heart,
Hide stretched no sun can cure.
You don't think your childhood is an Elgin marble, do you,
To be carted away in a boat and saved in a foreign museum?
Despite dollar devaluation and maturation of the mark,
we guarantee

All liars are cretins too.
We walk up Kerkyras on your street so lately dirt
and come to the Pizza Palace. The owners speak English.
You do not believe my affluent hunger.
“You want to eat?”
I want to. The ethic of the present tense.
We sit before pizza of feta,
Your fate in your fork, the knife in your shining heart,
Armed Forces network playing American Pie.
Demosthenes stutters against the waveless moon, an oratorio
Stoned on waves in silver spouts.
Greece is fragile, and you are hearing
Sound discover stone.

Auschwitz, Averoff, Lyubyanka

The dog's rabbinical stare
His pinafore over his scabs;
Mouth open
The moon sliding in strings
From his jaw,
The howl anguished ice
Out of the range of the human ear.
Neatness and candor fall in pieces
From the light.

Ah, So, and Aha

Oh, I can throw a pumpkin at the moon
And dance the lion in the rabbit's hat.
And I can eat a plum at noon
And spit the pit at Jack BeCrabbed Spratt.

Oh, I can pull the hair of a balloon
And stick it with a pit to make it fat.
And I can cry the looney tune
And smash with joy the nadir of the atom.

I can love and I can eat the dead
And I can make a god of daily bread.
but O my exile home, when fronted
By the moon, I am afraid.

The Picture of the Pergola at Sochi

The lady with the dog is
Gone beyond the frame.
Grapevines hang over the Black Sea
This cold summer.
Her beauty is perpetually spoken of
By the Lombardy leaves.

Roosevelt, Stalin, and Churchill
Sat here in latter days.
Her bustle turned aside the century
From the wooden columns;
And her parasol, a ghost filled with laughter,
Moves unreflected along the marble steps.

Song of an American

Help me. Help me.
I am free.
I am where I cannot be.
In the wind and in the joust
Of earth and sky,
An igneous boost
To limbo's eye.

No need needs me.
I am free.
I'm not what was made to be
For earth and tenure.
I am free. Help me. Help me.
Make me be.

Help me. Help me
Bring me down
To my knees in Settle Town
Help contain me.
I am free.
Help lasso me to a tree
I am like in air to drown.

Help me. Help me.
I am wild.
I am second nature's child.
Doomed to first
Caught in third,
I'm the meek to Satan's mild.
I am nothing running wild.

Help me. Help me.
I am free.
I am where I cannot be.
Can cannot,
And cannot can;
But I cannot be else than damned
To be a blowing grain of sand.

Lightning, fork me,
Rain, come down,
Help me now before I sound
In Thunder-Lost.
Sky, let loose me.
Earth, betake me.
Help me. Help me.

Help me. Help me.
I am free.
I am what I cannot be.
Help contain me, help refrain me.
Push the earth of earth against me.
Help me. Help me.
I am free.

Age 96, My Mother Speaks from Elderhaven

1. The Weatherman

And the weatherman
Level ear.
He wants the window over Home
And the window
The windows travel help
Up and down the level.
We can go in the home.
We can go in
And see the Indian home
And the body of the body of the home
That's alone that's alone
that's alone.
The country level, let the country
By the level country home
And the country alone.
And we don't want it.
We don't want it
But I don't see why.
Why did we stop this home?
The wonderful full
The wonderful full
On the window home
In the
He's the home, he's the home
What's that for?
What's that there?
I don't want to be in it.
I don't want to leave, leave home.
But he lives under the home,
And the level home.

2. Welfare

Will they bring it in to me?
Yes. I think they would.
The wonderful welfare.
I'll have the well fed.
I'll try and get the razor.
I can't go the rebel. Raise off!
I can't do the rubber welfare.

There was a welfare.

I can
And I cannot.

Maybe I can do it.
I don't know.
I don't think so
I don't think so.
They don't think so.

3. Wishes

I want to move in with a friend.

4. What Can You Do?

I can't do anything.
I don't know how.
It's all oil.

I'll try.
I'll look and look and look.

I can't do it
I can't do it
I can't do it
Until the bubble bubble;
No, I can't
 Because I've got the couple, trouble, double.

I can't do everything,
I!
The wonderful welfare.
The wonderful welcome.

5. The Do and the Don't

Couple the Do with
(Couple, double, double)
Don't.

I don't know what to do
 what to do
 what to do
And I don't know what to say.
They're all the double, the
 double, the double.
All the bubble, the bubble.

6. A Breeze

(As they approach the doorway to the outside.)

A breeze!
Oh, that's awful cold.
What can I do?
What can I do?

Psyche

Your eyes are on the vine
Blue melons in the sun.
How cool the tangle of your fingers in my hair!
Water melts in the wind,
A submission denied by the mountain
Whose rock holds the cricket to die and chirp ad infinitum.

Crumbs for the Bogeyman

A bogey followed us. He was threatening
because he was in love with you or me
and he carried an axe and a crowbar.
His shadow, hunched, showed through the locked cabin door,
but we opened it anyway (for we could not stay prisoners
forever)
and he did not strike.
But he followed us through the woods like the wolf.
You or I carried a little volume
whose spine was taped with tan leather.

Before that you or I alone
had run the world as if in a garlanded race
or in escape from an enemy we knew was not there.
We stopped at groups of surprised people
on the playground of the world
to laugh and play freeze-postures with them.
They answered our laughing, curious because they did not
know
the metaphors of the game (Catch, catch the minotaur).
We treated them like stiles to pass through, to pass over
you or I alone running as hard as we could.
We won the book, a little volume
whose spine was taped with tan leather.

Suddenly, in the middle of the woods
you or I turned back to him saying only:
“Give them to me.”
You or I were surprised the way he gave up axe and crowbar
both, immediately, as if he had never meant to kill one
of us to take the other.
Yet he kept on following us through the woods some distance
behind
pretending not to be impotent.

“You carry the axe,” you said to me or I to you.
We carried the weapons
I the axe you the crowbar or I the crowbar you the axe
heavily
like Pilgrims their guns at Thanksgiving with sighs of safety
giving thanks for each other together.
when he called and said slyly, holding it out:
“Isn’t this your book you left?”
You or I looked.
It was a different shade of tan.

“No. You keep it,” you or I said. We felt safe
as if the gift had cost us nothing.
He did not love the book as you or I had. It was not the same
prize, but at least we did not have to kill him.
He was chagrined and left us so we could go in the cabin
and leave the door open.

The Free Bird Flew into the Waterwheel

The free bird flew into the waterwheel
and broke its neck.
Yet it was glad.
When it cried the waterwheel spilled its tears
poolang! into the canal,
And in the reflection, the sky where it had flown
shimmered bright.
The tears followed the canal to a river
and followed the river to sea.
The water-shed sighed,
But the bird was free and died.

I Came Face to Face with the River

~ for Doris Betts

I came face to face with the river.
It rolled,
It went on like brown oil without speaking.
It looked like the broad back of earth
Going,
It had no pupil; it was opaque
Going.

An Egyptian eye of the West,
Sockets too far-spaced to see
It came from so far
So far beyond it was going.

I never turned my eyes to go with it
For I was face to face with it.
It looked at me in its going
It looked at me beyond its going,
It looked at me under its going,
Its banks irrelevant
Going,
Its bed irrelevant, under,
Its stare always
Under its going,
Facing me without speaking.

Prehistoric crawdaddies, cities of abraded stones,
Bows and arrows, flotsgrass, frogwarts, roots,
Hyacinths, honk-logs and ferns
Cumulate velvet silt
Thickened the dark gravy of its gaze,
Going,
Invisible vegetables of history
Going.

I came face to face with it
Going
It went on beyond without speaking,
It went without speaking
Going,
It looked at me face to face.

Knowing

A white cat walks up the whitewashed street
From the white house past the long white wall.
A radio practices Mozart.
Beyond the tile roof
I cannot see the blue.
It is 7 PM
And the sun has turned to gold.

Behind the dot, the pupil of an eye,
The gateway to what I do not know.
I concentrate.
Forgetting, I look into the pupil.
It opens and takes in the teacher.

The blue sea beyond
Knows the gold tile roof
Where a radio practices Mozart
Knows the white house past the long white wall
Where the white cat sits down in the whitewashed street.

Song for the Underworld

I tell you
I want to wander restless the earth
And sleep in the fitful hay
And jump only at the bird's lark
And be responsible to no one's smile
Or to the beckon of no creature
 but the finger of the tree.

My world will be foggy and moist
And I will move in a swirl which is silent.
All pools will glisten darkly with the omen of the moon.
And the cows will know of me,
And the sheep
And all the silent animals.
Even the rain will cry in silence
With no suspicion of a latent wind
Or possibility of sigh or gusty sob.

Oh, make it wait
With the pot-holes half mounded
And the graves still undug,
the fields unwalked, the leaves hanging—
And I promise, my tiptoes will be soundless,
And I shall enter so silent
 that the darkness and wet will laugh
 that I am there.
Even their laughter secret.

I am the bell.
The bell is I
I have a tongue
Which spans the sky.

I have a nose
which clinks my cheek.

I have an eye
Irrepressible to peek.

My clapper, my eye,
My tongue, my nose,
As I turn
In refrain
With the deep of the sky
Begin to sing.

Plunket!
A hump-back bird turns spy.

And I
Having sung
Full up
Ecstatic,
Turn my back.

Now
Sounding, miraculously, like a memory
I fall.
I fade.

Couple

On the balcony
Lives an old woman in black
Who cracks nuts and spits
A lot.

“Och-ch-ch,” she sighs
Like Atlas grown too old
To carry the world.

The upstream wail from the chimney
Of her life:
“What can I do?”

A cat with gray stripes
And a plump brown hen
Come from the courtyard
To stroll the street.
“Brrrp,” she calls—her horrible old husband
Died last year—throwing down
Corn kernels.

The cat lies down to sleep
While the hen does its pecking.
“They have company,” says
The old woman.

Sometimes, in the afternoon after siesta
The cat, with great style, as if sporting
A cane instead of four feet
Sways down the road
Ignoring the two-footed
Jerks
Of the hen.
They pretend not to be together.

The Bell and the Turkey

The hung bell lolloped,
Dropping a tone upon the fat ground.
A fillup sprouted there,
Spilling loaves.

The fractious turkey, astrut with beak
Taut to the seams, game, wicked and gravelled,
Coughing, struck deep into the bread,
Showering crumbs and scowling.

His face was a scar.
His beak a spear.
His gizzard was tough with whipsnard,
His box full of stones
And his greed shrieking.
“What you hunt for, Tassel Brain?”
Asked the bell
Round of mouth,
Tongue wagging.

The turkey looked and saw the moon
And heard the tone,
Squawked,
Spat infamy,
Shot his skittles into bread,
Cursed,
Shook the pebbles of his face
Until they rattled.

The hung silver laughed
In its urn of dew.
But the sound of the bell was as nothing
To the curse of the turkey’s chew.

How Jane Continues Her Search Since the Roles Don't Fit

Jane Jane Fonda Fonda

Sister brother Vespa Honda angel of
arch, Jane of

Ach-So sayeth the Feature, ripping off the roles
from the Silver Screen ("They don't fit")
Rolling them with the tongue-lick of Cat Ballou
Pasting the last cigarette together
at the campfire of America's evensong.

Peter took the easy flame out.

Jane bought Raggedy Andy's hair
and left her stricken gaze in neurotic Stockholm
along with the Nobel lies.

America breeds aristocrats with bored-ass accents
and ideals so high and thin
they curl when shaved.

Like her eyebrows which she shaved in horseshoes
for the marathon
they could not protect her unconvincing low-class,
boarding-house head
from the shot reserved for horses.

Silent money's silence outroars the clatter
of free dish-night.

Jane Jane Fonda Fonda

Roger Henry Vadim Vadim

Thomas Henry Hayden Hayden

Ted Turner Turner Ted

Godard Godard Henry

God Art Jane of Ach-So close to the bone,

Sharp-shooting girl aristocrat,

Pistol nostrils wide open flare for the

race, for fair Bragg, justice for the poor deprived
so lately discovered.

All style, paced through the French,
through Vanessa
through illegitimate babies
brigits bardoed
cast-off Barbie dolls
abandoned Barbarellas,
Baby Jane abandoned, traded in for the role of
“most cunnilingual (French and English) cunt of the GI
coffeeshop,”
with steel heart and golden luggage kluted by narco
cops on the Canadian border
not one ounce of extra hip on the flesh
from which they could extract their pound.

The Silver Screen is still unused.
Private parts exposed, brandished with the glitter of new
chastity belts.
Hum parodies of steelyard blues;
Uninhabited symbolines vacated by the best female hope of
Albion
A ghost in Grapes of Wrath outfit, walking on the wild side
locked in weeds of wedlock, fucking the fatherland
with Donald Henry Sutherland, substitute experiments in
insurrection and rhetoric technology
erect from Electra without penetration.
There is beauty in leather but not necessarily independence.
Ou sont les negligees of yesteryear?
We wait to sing, Jane Jane Fonda Fonda.
Lead the way.
We're watching, the critics.
Resurrect Albertine, Sappho, and the glamorous snake of
Cleopatra.

Iran

Hafez is hit today in the street
By a Paykan with a British motor.
Blood rises not as a rose from the root
But white as shattered glass
Upon the mountain, and unseen
By drivers smogged in argument insurance
Which pays for the fender cut to a smile.

Pride is metal. Snow glitters.
But nothing is silent. Ferdowsi is a maidan of screams
Where Beluchistanis beg
And the ghosts of the British
Serve tea behind gates,
Where Persians learned English
And English learned Farsi
And Americans moved uptown
And kings turned into photos framed
And mullahs framed mullahs
And the new mosaic of enemies and Mongols
Turn tiretracks to idiots,
And the tears of the desert are dry.

Something was gored. Something gushes.
The bargain is struck.
The lotus blossom, marked off by stones on the highway
to Babol,
An empty chador bleeding oil as black as blood.

Ferdowsi is hit today on the highway
By a Freuhauf with a German motor.
The wind discovers new dimensions in Iran,
Empty places to blow within,
Where stories once spun.

One Inch More

Oh inchworm, dressed to ape a twig,
What fate led you through rain and wind
To walk upon my blue raincoat
As if upon a garden path?

I shoot you with my finger to the floor
Of my warm truck.
You land in folds of rubber near the gear box
Nestled on the warmth as if on leaves,
Never suspecting when I shift first to second,
You will be squashed.

Emily Bronte Dying of Consumption

I wish for the chop-chop
of midwinter's waves.

I wish the water's winds
Would gut me down

And then I would turn my face
Lightning white
To shock you



O break me open
Heart to crotch!

This is a dim cry,
But in the guilt that beats
It strives
To strive
And match some sun



Wear me.
Bore me.
I cannot live and not live.
Who knows what I have to show?

I would
Like sunrise,
Spit blood.
But my veins
Are dry.

Neat

Move the mountain with a forefinger.
Snap the hickory tree with a thumbnail.
Interrupt the snakes' city
And the ants' medieval fortresses.

Suck up the leaf in the vacuum cleaner
Throw the mouse down the Dispose-All
Build a trapeze for a bird
And give it peanut butter.

Poetasters

The chocolate pie said to the chocolate pudding,

"I have meringue."

The chocolate pudding said to the mousse,

"You have holes."

The mousse said to the Napoleon,

"You are stuffed."

The Napoleon said to the Copenhagen,

"I am French."

The Copenhagen said to the spumoni,

"You are fat and gaudy."

The spumoni said to the ice cream,

"I am holy. See?"

The ice cream melted.

In a self-contained, hermi-sealed tin container

On a truck along an interstate highway full of potholes

The ice cream churned

Until it escaped its incarnation as dessert

And became butter

That wouldn't melt in your mouth.

Ode to Vivien Leigh

~ for Tony Harvey

Is that what men are really like, Mrs. Tweadwell?
Mrs. Tweadwell,
Mrs. Tweadwell lisping in the mirror,
Who saw perhaps the ghost of Belle Reve?

You always did have fabulous hiccups
And it did not matter about Elephant Walk
Or your blood ribbons trailing in Titus Andronicus
Or your accent in Shakespeare which came from Roehampton.
No cat ever woke more sweetly on a pillow.
You were not an ad for a shoe sole.

Oh, are you tearing down the portieres of heaven
And will you visit us in green again,
Complete with Mammy
To circumvent the wiles of Old Kay Porter
 making you be Lady Waterloo,
 that queendom she must claim alone?
And will you, who started in Darjeeling
Fool us all?
Are you singing those notes now from Parvae Stellae
In your best South Kensington?

We are looking at you with both hands clenched upon the bars
And heeding you:
And we are trying not, not to hang back with the apes.

I Saw *Red Shoes* Again After 20 Years and It Was a Good Movie

The daring thoughts are in us.
We had never thought to break the bounds to fly
Without a payment to the body.
But ecstasy, it calls the bird.
There is no intent in lifting of the wings
No music calls.
To go is simple as a pointed toe
And space is shorn into infinity.

On Returning Home

Two eyes reel across the road
Oysters of the night.
I know I am back home.
They do not recognize me, Odysseus of the Headlights,
Disembodied like my dream.
Black on my paws,
Ears bearing the bearer, listening and slow,
Am I a possum on luminous skates?
A cat? A pig? Behind whose shallow eyes do I lurk?
Or is it they
Who dream I have killed whatever it was
And imbedded the knowledge in velvet by the side of the
road?



Photo by John Marvel

DAPHNE ATHAS was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and moved to Chapel Hill, North Carolina, at age fifteen. She received her Bachelor of Arts from The University of North Carolina and did graduate work at Harvard School of Education. Her novels include *The Weather of the Heart*, *The Fourth World*, *Entering Ephesus*, and *Cora*. She is the author of a nonfiction memoir, *Greece by Prejudice*, and coauthor with Gurney Campbell of the play, *Sit on the Earth*. She is the recipient of two Sir Walter Raleigh Awards, two National Endowment of the Arts Awards, two MacDowell Fellowships. She was Fulbright Professor of American Literature at the University of Tehran in the middle seventies. Her novel *Entering Ephesus* was on *Time Magazine's* Ten Best Fiction List in 1971, and she was cited in the *Pushcart Prize Collection for 1984* as an Outstanding Writer in Nonfiction for her essay "Why There Are No Southern Writers." She teaches writing at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

\$8⁹⁵

ISBN: 0-932662-78-1

Few writers are so powerfully idiosyncratic as Daphne Athas. In this collection of poetry, her first, she brings her courage, individuality, and humor to bear upon fresh subjects and new forms.

—Fred Chappell

Crumbs for the Bogeyman is a moveable feast of wit, wisdom, and heady song from Greece and Iran to the back roads of North Carolina and to the very heart of America. Who could resist Daphne Athas' stunning array, ranging from chthonic "oysters of the night" to Dionysian "blue melons in the sun"!

—A. Poulin, Jr.

What I like best about Daphne Athas's poetry is the always-refreshing way it has of combining a millennial recollection of Greece—ancient and modern—and an immediate registration, in vivid language charged with excitement, of the phenomenal moment, Right Now. Only Daphne Athas can talk with equal authority and wisdom of Electra and Jane Fonda, Crete and Carboro. I am convinced and delighted.

—William Harmon

St. Andrews Press



St. Andrews College